

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

The magazine of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association



2011 Soaring to New Heights Conference Issue

Conference Guide Inside - **Take this Issue to Chicago!**





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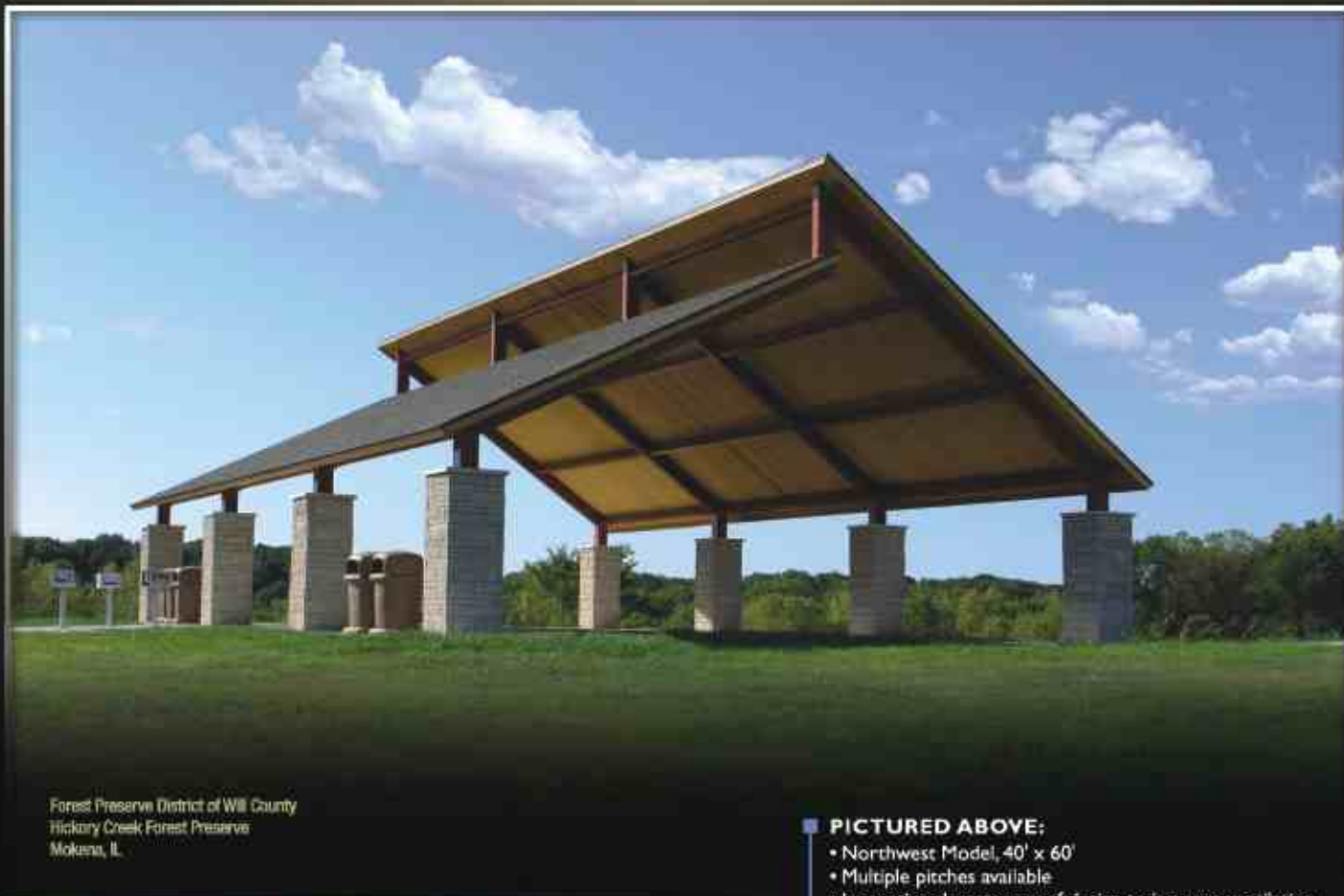
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Take this Issue to Chicago!

ON THE COVER

"I See a Fish!" cover photo taken by Jayne Bohner from the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County as part of the 2010 "Give Us Your Best Shot" Photo Contest.

FROM THE EDITOR

It's showtime! Just like many of you who are gearing-up to attend the Soaring to New Heights Conference on January 27th through 29th, I am making my preparation for looking, learning and meeting new faces at what I have been told is the "happening" hosted by the IAPD and IPRA.



Though I am a veteran when it comes to conferences and trade shows in general, I am looking forward to my first parks and recreation "rodeo". If you have ever attended any kind of event like this, you know that it is 12 pounds of information stuffed into a 3 pound brain... well, at least my brain. The trick to absorbing the greatest amount of information from a three-day learning experience is to invest time before the event with two simple rules: #1) prioritize what you want to learn from the event and #2) develop a scheduled plan to get #1 done. This two-part plan may appear simplistic, but the implementation is not. If any of you have aimlessly wandered the ravaged store aisles on Christmas Eve in search for a last minute gift... you know to what I am referring.

A key tool you can use for your plan of action before and during the conference begins on page 17 of this issue and at www.ilparksconference.com. The conference program is the result of a great amount of work by IAPD and IPRA staffers. Use this 60 page program to carefully plan your conference workshop schedule and exhibit routes. From the long list of great vendors exhibiting this year, make yourself a priority list of booths to visit. If you can check a few exhibitors off of your visit list between workshops, great. Ask every exhibitor you visit to send you their information via mail. Most vendors are happy to oblige and by the end of the day, your arms will appreciate it. If you are part of a group attending from your organization, split the must-visit vendor list between everybody.

One of my final tips I will share with you for an effective conference experience applies to your business cards. If your cell phone number is not printed on them, pre-write it on the back of each. Many of you will bump into a number of friends and colleagues during the event. This can be a serious time-killer during the crunch part of your show day. Hand them a card, tell them your cell number is on the back and make plans for a meal break or one of the enjoyable social events hosted by the conference in the evening. I also fit my shirt pocket with a heavy piece of card-stock, dividing it into an "in and out box", by placing my own business cards in one half and cards I gather in the other. Have you ever fumbled through a stack of cards to find your own? *My point, exactly.*

Like the goal of every attendee, I hope to absorb a wealth of information and make many new friends at my first IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference. Just make sure your cell number is on the back of the card you hand me...

— TODD SILVEY
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Peter M. Murphy
IAPD President and CEO

Board Service Creates an Opportunity for Lifelong Learning

Serving on a park district, forest preserve, conservation, recreation and special recreation agency board has many rewarding moments. It also is a catalyst for opportunities to engage in continuing education. No individual comes to a board with a complete understanding or knowledge of how the agency of which they are elected to operate, and regardless of their prior experience serving on boards. The ability to be a highly effective and functioning board member demands individual growth.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I don't think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday." With that in mind, the Illinois Association of Park Districts is dedicated to filling this need for commissioner education. Recently we have had seminars on:

- Understanding Park District Finances
- Protecting Yourself from Hackers and Internet Thieves, and Finding Personal Information Online
- Records Retention and Destruction, and Boardmanship
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Employment and Labor Law Updates
- Social Media Risks
- How to Maximize CPI Increases for the Payment of Annual Debt Service
- The Freedom of Information Act and other top legal issues
- 2010 Tort Liability Cases that provide the Guide Posts

The IAPD staff and Board of Trustees are not one to rest on their laurels and 2011 will be an exceptional year for educational opportunities. Beginning on January 27, 2011 the IAPD/IPRA *Soaring to New Heights* Annual Conference will kick off and provide more than 200 different educational sessions over a three-day period. This is an opportunity no one should miss. The conference, hosted by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association, is without question the finest annual conference for parks and recreation offered in the nation. A brief sampling of sessions that may be of interest to you include:

- **Running Effective Meetings.** Participants will learn how to systematically approach leading and participating in meetings and how to apply tactical thinking techniques.
- **Strong Board and Director Teams: What Does it Take?** Participants will learn how to identify areas for potential board/director agreements to ensure all parties contribute from their appropriate roles and responsibilities.
- **Getting the Right Game Plan for Your Future.** Participants will gain knowledge of what constitutes an effective strategic plan and about the pitfalls, distractions and confusion that an ineffective process creates when it isn't grounded in realistic goals, timelines or other organizational realities.
- **Board Leadership: Strategies for Effective Board Meetings.** Participants will identify the "must haves" for board meeting agenda planning. Participants will identify strategies for building consensus on the team.

In times of profound change,
the learners inherit the earth,
while the learned find
themselves beautifully
equipped to deal with a world
that no longer exists.

— Al Rogers



Registration is available on the conference Website at www.ilparksconference.org. Since this is an election year, there will be many new commissioners elected to park, forest preserve, and conservation districts across the state of Illinois. IAPD will be showcasing its Commissioner Boot Camps for new and seasoned commissioners alike. These will be taking place throughout the state of Illinois during the spring and early summer of 2011. Please plan to attend one located in proximity to your agency. A full schedule of these will be sent to you prior to the April 5, 2011 election.

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IAPD education is also only a computer click away with its first-in-the-nation offering of online board member education. It can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week and taken at your own pace.

Board members that have taken this course have indicated that it is a great tool for board members regardless of the size of the agency.

The course is broken into seven (7) modules which include information on healthy and effective board relationships, the importance of a board job descriptions and how to develop them, the need for a code of conduct and how to create one, board preparation on hiring the executive, meeting management, political advocacy and evaluating the effectiveness of your board.

This online course is a content-rich source of information with click-throughs to an impressive array of in-depth reading and educational materials that can always be available to you.

The Illinois Association of Park Districts offers a variety of must have written publications to assist commissioners with their duties of serving on a park district, forest preserve, conservation or recreation agency board. The following are some of the resources available to you:

- **Get On Board, Essential Wisdom for Board Members and Executives:** Whether you're a board member or an agency administrator, this book is your leadership guide to becoming an effective steward of the public's trust. While you learn the principles of board service, you'll also be reminded why parks, recreation, and conservation are vital to our well being.
- **Financial Procedures Manual:** This easy-to-read guide is packed with practical information about park district financial procedures. It includes sections on budget philosophy and preparation, truth in taxation, the levy process, budget and appropriations, bonds, levies and investments. *Financial Procedures* is an ideal resource for board members and administrators.
- **Illinois Park District Law Handbook:** This fully updated 6th edition consolidates this body of law into a single user-friendly volume that explains the complex laws and codes that govern local park districts.
- **The Park District Code:** *The Park District Code* contains the complete compilation of laws affecting park districts. Key sections cover laws and amendments such as those concerning the Open Meetings Act and sharing public information at each park district as required by revisions to the Freedom of Information Act, changes to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Laws (PTELL), and park district authority to use electronic reverse auctions. The revised and expanded text includes all applicable legislation enacted by the 96th Illinois General Assembly through 2010.

Start the New Year with a pledge to become involved in the benefits of IAPD's educational offerings and the unparalleled opportunities for networking with elected officials across the state of Illinois.

The words of Marian Wright Edelman, president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund and advocate of children's rights and programs that support children, still ring true today, "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."

My best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year.

2011 IAPD CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 27-29
IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference
Hilton Chicago

Mar 16-18
NRPA National Legislative Forum on Parks and Recreation
Grand Hyatt, Washington, D.C.

April/May
Flying 4 Kids Statewide Kite Fly

May 3
Parks Day at the Capitol
State Capitol, Springfield

May 3
Legislative Reception
Illini Country Club, Springfield

May 4
Legislative Conference
Hilton Hotel, Springfield

May 16
Summer Golf Tour
Tanna Farms Golf Club, GolfVisions Management

July 21
Legislative Golf Outing
White Pines Golf Club, Bensenville Park District

Aug 8
Summer Golf Tour
Orchard Valley Golf Course, Fox Valley Park District

Aug 20
Park District Conservation Day
Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield

Sep 20
Summer Golf Tour
Bridges of Poplar Creek Country Club, Hoffman Estates Park District

Oct 1
Board of Trustees Meeting

Oct 14
The Best of the Best Awards Gala
Traditions at Chevy Chase Country Club, Wheeling Park District

Oct 27
Legal Symposium
McDonalds Training Center, Hyatt Lodge, Oak Brook

Nov 1-4
NRPA Congress & Exposition
Atlanta, Georgia

Jan 26-28, 2012
IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference,
Hyatt Regency, Chicago



Mike Selep, CPRP
IPRA Interim CEO

Put Your Conference Game Plan Together - Don't Forget to Include the Networking

What do you get when you assemble over 4,000 of the top parks and recreation professionals, elected officials and suppliers in the state of Illinois the last weekend in January at the Chicago Hilton? This sounds like the opening pitch for a presentation to ABC for a new show to replace *Dancing with the Stars*. If you guessed the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference, the premier opportunity for education and networking for the parks and recreation profession, you are correct.

As staff members at IPRA and IAPD, we began planning the 2011 conference with the help of a committed group of volunteers the Sunday morning after the 2010 conference. I want to personally thank Dina Kartch, the IPRA Conference and Education Director, and Sue Triphahn, the IAPD Educational Services Director, for their dedicated service to the memberships of both IPRA and IAPD. They are both the equivalent of conductors of a world class symphonic orchestra. I want to also thank the orchestra itself – the staff of IPRA and IAPD and members of the conference committee who have spent countless hours helping plan the conference as well as for the time and energy that they devote during the conference itself. The conference is a labor of love for everyone involved. We are all excited about the 2011 Soaring to New Heights Conference. It is the most important opportunity for all of our members to gather in one assembly. The lineup of educational sessions, meetings and events is beyond impressive.

Not only is this annual conference loaded with nearly 200 educational sessions and over 300 exhibitors, it also serves as the opportunity to formally recognize some of the top agencies, professionals and elected officials for their achievements through a series of meetings and luncheons. There is an extremely formal agenda of educational sessions and meetings. Make sure that you are strategic in your approach to this year's conference.

Please take some time to review the information included in this issue of the magazine to put together your game plan of which sessions and meetings you would like to attend. Talk over your plans with your co-workers, fellow commissioners or students that are also attending to make sure that you are maximizing the information gained at conference for yourself and your agency.

Perhaps more important than attending the formal education sessions and meetings, is to include time in your game plan to establish new professional contacts and reconnect with existing contacts. These connections take place through informal mini meetings that occur before or after sessions. These meetings occur in hallways, in exhibit halls, during meals and at social events. These mini meetings are far more numerous than those that are organized. At the 2010 Soaring to New Heights Conference, there were over 242,000 documented informal mini meetings that occurred.

Develop your conference game plan. Attend some great sessions, meetings and events. Connect with professionals, commissioners and vendors. Take time to reflect, think big and celebrate accomplishments. Most importantly don't be afraid to enjoy yourself.



It is great to catch up on personal items by finding out who has changed jobs or has a new addition to their family; however, it is necessary to take advantage of this time by setting up a flexible agenda for your mini meetings. Take a few minutes to develop three or four questions that you can ask each individual that you enter into a mini meeting with during the conference. Perhaps the individual that you speak with will not have answers to your questions, but they might be able to share the name of an individual that will be able to provide an answer for you. Every individual at the conference is a potential resource for you, whether they are in a session with you, in the exhibit hall or even the All Section Social. Take full advantage of the opportunity.

Please keep in mind that conference is some needed time out of the office and away from programs. It is your chance to pause and reflect upon the successes that you have had both

If you are new to the conference, ask fellow students, co-workers or commissioners what sessions, meetings or events they would recommend attending. If you are a returning attendee, make sure to share your experiences with those new to the conference and try something new that you have not tried before.

personally and with your agency over the past year. It is also a time to examine your current career and agency deficits and conceptualize what you can do to take both to the next level. You will have the opportunity to pull out a few good nuggets of information from each session and meeting that you attend. Do not be afraid to become excited about how you can use this information to either formulate a new idea or expand upon existing programs or services.

If you are new to the conference, ask fellow students, co-workers or commissioners what sessions, meetings or events they would recommend attending. If you are a returning attendee, make sure to share your experiences with those new to the conference and try something new that you have not tried before.

All IPRA members will be invited to share their experiences with students at the Professional Connection on Thursday evening and Speed Mentoring and Resume Review sessions on Friday. Please consider sharing your experiences in the field of parks and recreation with students. It is a great way to help prepare students for entry into the career and connect with those students as they will be looking for internship and entry-level opportunities in the upcoming months. For students and new professionals, this may be the first time for organized professional networking. It can be a bit overwhelming. As an experienced member, please take some time to share your experiences to help these new attendees.

Develop your conference game plan. Attend some great sessions, meetings and events. Connect with professionals, commissioners and vendors. Take time to reflect, think big and celebrate accomplishments. Most importantly don't be afraid to enjoy yourself. Please take a few moments to jot down some suggestions for future educational sessions to share, as we will start planning for the 2012 conference on Sunday, January 30th.

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IAPD Opposes the Release of Personal Information About Children

The children who participate in park and recreation programs are often the face of your agencies. Their pictures are on your brochures, posters, and other publications. Our kids breathe life into what we do, and it is our responsibility to keep them smiling *and to keep them safe*.

As you are likely aware, a primary target of the 2009 rewrite of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)¹ was the elimination of several exemptions that ensured certain information could be shielded from public disclosure. The most significant casualty of those targets was the specific exemption for the names, addresses, and other personal information of participants and registrants in park district, forest preserve district, and conservation district programs. As you know, the IAPD worked extremely hard for the original inclusion of this exemption, and we will not stop our advocacy efforts until it is restored.

Until we achieve our goal, all member agencies should know that the elimination of specific exemptions under FOIA does not automatically mean that personal information like the names of children must be released. In fact, the IAPD strongly opposes the distribution of sensitive information relating to children and encourages you to follow the procedures required by FOIA to ensure that it remains protected from those who could harm our kids.

Sensitive Information Can Still Be Withheld, but Proper Steps Must Be Followed

Proponents of the new FOIA rules often argue that a laundry list of specific exemptions is not needed to prevent the disclosure of sensitive records because the FOIA still allows such information to be withheld under the invasion of personal privacy exemption. Few reasonable people would argue that any interest a member of the general public has in the names of children participating in park and recreation programs is outweighed by the highly personal nature of that information and the child's right to privacy. In the FOIA context, this means that if a public agency receives a request for information about children who participate in park and recreation programs, the unwarranted invasion of personal privacy exemption ought to allow the public agency to withhold the information. The catch, of course, is that agencies must now follow FOIA's protracted procedures before withholding information under that exemption.

Steps for Denying Release of Information

Frustrated park, forest preserve and conservation districts may be inclined to outright refuse to give up information about their child participants and simply deny a FOIA request for this information. The potential problem with this approach is that if FOIA's requirements are not strictly followed and the district is sued, a court or the Public Access Counselor (PAC) may ignore the merits of the exception and order the agency to provide the information based on a technicality, *i.e.*, because the agency did not follow proper legal procedures to deny the request.

To avoid such an unjust result, agencies must take steps *before* asserting that a record will be withheld from a FOIA requester under the invasion of personal privacy exemption. First, the agency must provide

written notice to the requester and the PAC that it intends to deny the FOIA request because a child's name is "information that is highly personal or objectionable to a reasonable person and in which the subject's right to privacy outweighs any legitimate public interest in obtaining the information."³ In other words, such disclosure to the public would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. This "notice of intent to deny a request" must be delivered to the FOIA requester and the PAC within 5 days of receiving the FOIA request and must include: (1) a copy of the request for access to records; (2) the proposed response from the public body; and (3) a detailed summary of the public body's basis for asserting the exemption.⁴ Once the public body issues a notice of intent to deny a request to the PAC and FOIA requester, the time period for actually denying the request is obviously tolled until the PAC concludes her inquiry.⁵

Cooperate if PAC Exercises Her Right to Further Inquiry

After receiving your agency's notice of intent to deny the request for a child's information, the PAC has 5 working days to determine whether further inquiry is warranted, *i.e.*, whether additional information is needed for her to make a determination.⁶ If further inquiry is warranted, the PAC may require the public body to furnish records or other documents to facilitate her review. If so, the public body must provide copies of the records requested by the PAC within 7 working days after receiving her request.⁷

Public bodies should make every effort to cooperate with the PAC when seeking to utilize the invasion of personal privacy exemption. Failure to cooperate could encourage the PAC to deny the approval to utilize the exemption, and the Attorney General can issue a subpoena to obtain the records anyway.⁸ Public bodies should also know that if the PAC asks for records that contain sensitive information, FOIA *prohibits* the PAC from disclosing the information or documents that the public body claims are exempt from disclosure.⁹

One would hope that the PAC would not need any information except the FOIA request and the public body's proposed denial letter summarizing the basis for it to determine that releasing the names of children invades their right to privacy and outweighs any legitimate public interest in obtaining the information. However, if the PAC requests additional information, it behooves public agencies to cooperate with the inquiry and defend the safety of our kids.

Early Opinions Suggest PAC Would Allow Your Agency to Withhold Personal Information about Children

One of the top themes embraced by the Attorney General on her homepage is "Safeguarding Children."¹⁰ The Attorney General's PAC has also stated that she is very sensitive to the issue of releasing the names of children, and (unofficially) that the disclosure of this information would likely qualify as an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. Although the PAC must decide each public agency's request to use the invasion of personal privacy exemption on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual facts, some of her early decisions shed light on how your agency's request might be analyzed.

Names of Students in Regular and Special Education Programs

During this year's Legal Symposium, we referenced three of the PAC's early decisions that appear to suggest that if districts follow the proper procedures for invoking the invasion of personal privacy exemption, the PAC would likely approve the request to withhold the names of minor children. Those decisions involved names of students participating in regular and special education programs¹¹ as well as minors' names, names and addresses of schools they attend, dates of births, grade levels, and names of their fathers.¹² In all three cases, the PAC granted the agency's request to withhold the information.

More recently, the PAC has issued at least three additional opinions that suggest an agency's request to withhold information about children who participate in park and recreation programs would be granted.

Minor Children of Public Pension Recipients

In 2010 PAC 9984, the PAC considered a request from the Chicago Teacher's Pension Fund to deny the release of, among other things, the first name of minor children of pension recipients. The PAC allowed the Fund to withhold names of these children and supported her decision by noting the following about information identifying the beneficiaries of pension fund participants.

[A] beneficiary of a pension fund has a reasonable expectation of privacy that his or her name will not be disclosed to the public. These individuals may or may not be public employees and are generally named as beneficiaries based on their personal relationship with the pension fund participant. . . . [T]here is nothing that suggests that the public has a significant legitimate interest in obtaining the names of the beneficiaries.

Student Applications to the Illinois Math and Science Academy

Perhaps more telling is the PAC's opinion in 2010 PAC 9737, which involved a response to a request from the Illinois Math and Science Academy (Academy) to deny a FOIA request for "[a]ll invited Class of 2013 student applications that [the] selection committee reviews" Although it is not entirely clear from the PAC's opinion whether the Academy sought to withhold the names of the minor applicants except to the extent they were listed on the applications, the PAC's rationale for approving the Academy's request to deny disclosure of responsive documents is significant.

The information provided by the student applicants, their parents, and their teachers, counselors and principals is highly personal information pertaining to minor children. . . . Release of such information regarding minors would be objectionable to a reasonable person, constituting an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, and thus, the Academy has met its initial burden of demonstrating that these documents are exempt from disclosure under 7(1)(c) of FOIA.

Names of Individuals on Waiting List for Public Housing

Finally, although 2010 PAC 10111 did not involve the names of minors *per se*, the PAC did consider a pre-authorization request to exempt the name and address of individuals on a waiting list for public housing. Park and recreation programs could be analogized to public housing to the extent that both are programs facilitated by public bodies. In 2010 PAC 10111, the PAC determined that "the disclosure of the names on a waiting list for public housing for seniors . . . could be seen as highly personal or objectionable to the reasonable person under Section 7(1)(c)." Surely if disclosing the name of a senior is an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, providing the name of a child would be, too.

If you are interested in reviewing any of these decisions, you may download them and other pre-approval and denial letters from the Attorney General's website. We have also provided a link under the Public Resources tab of the Legal Assistance section of our website at www.ilparks.org.

Home Addresses Are "Private Information" That Can Typically Be Withheld Without the PAC's Consent

If your agency receives a categorical request for information about participants in your programs, remember that exemptions other than the invasion of personal privacy exemption may also allow you to withhold certain information. For example, home or personal telephone numbers and personal email addresses are "private information" that generally can be withheld without seeking the PAC's approval. Home addresses are also "private information" that can be withheld from public disclosure without the PAC's consent unless another law requires the release or unless compiled without the possibility of attribution to any person.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS SHOULD NOT BE RELEASED

As many of you are probably aware from the IAPD's Legislative Alerts and Updates, the Illinois legislature voted to override the Governor's Amendatory Veto of House Bill 5154 (P.A. 96-1483). As a result, the disclosure of employee performance evaluations in response to Freedom of Information Act requests is prohibited under the Personnel Record Review Act effective December 1, 2010.

In other words, not only may a public agency withhold performance evaluations when responding to a FOIA request, but such performance evaluations must be withheld.

There has been a widespread reluctance to amend the new FOIA during its first year of existence. Therefore, the passage of House Bill 5154 and the successful override of the Governor's Amendatory Veto with supermajority votes in both chambers was a substantial victory for local government. We know that many of you made calls to your Senators and Representatives. Passage of House Bill 5154 would not have been possible without these grassroots advocacy efforts!

Summary

Rest assured that the IAPD will continue our efforts to amend FOIA to restore the specific exemption for the names, addresses, and other personal information of participants and registrants in park district, forest preserve district, and conservation district programs. In the meantime, we will continue to strongly urge our members to protect the identities of children by seeking the PAC's approval to withhold those names and not to release them. To ensure that this information is protected, it is imperative that agencies follow the procedures outlined above by delivering the appropriate notice of intent to deny the FOIA request to both the PAC and the FOIA requester within the 5-day timeframe. We encourage you to work with your local counsel to ensure this notice is properly drafted. Of course, the IAPD is always here if you need help.

¹ 5 ILCS 140/1 *et seq.*

² 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(c)

³ *Id.*

⁴ 5 ILCS 140/9.5(b)

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ 5 ILCS 140/9.5(c)

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ <http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/>

¹¹ 2010 PAC 8158 and 2010 PAC 8446

¹² 2010 PAC 7302

¹³ 5 ILCS 140/2(c-5), 140/7(1)(b)

A close-up photograph of a young boy with dark hair, wearing a dark blue zip-up jacket. He is holding a wooden stick with a large, white marshmallow on it, and he has some marshmallow residue on his lips. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and outdoor equipment.

AND DON'T COME HOME

**UNTIL
DINNER!**

BY MICHELLE MOHNEY

Chicago Wilderness Communication Coordinator

Photos by Kathy Andrews and Emilian Geczi



An ever-growing body of research is telling us that time spent outdoors in nature is critical to children's physical, social and emotional development. But childhood has changed. Kids today build internet sites instead of constructing forts in the woods. Music piped into earphones has replaced listening for the sounds of bird calls and frog croaks. Cell phones and emails are more efficient than two cups on a string or flashlight signals.

Research has demonstrated that outdoor play helps children manage stress and become more resilient. Nature spaces stimulate children's limitless imaginations and nurture curiosity.

Young people who grow up spending time in nature are also more likely to be strong advocates for the environment when they reach adulthood. Microbiologists are even unearthing reasons to get outside; according to research presented at the 110th General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology, exposure to a soil bacterium may decrease anxiety and increase learning (by increasing levels of serotonin in the brain)!

Growing Awareness

The movement to connect children and nature was popularized by journalist Richard Louv in 2005. It has since expanded to a national coalition, regional initiatives, community programs, and recently the launch of First Lady Obama's "Let's Move" campaign; President Obama issued a proclamation that June is "Great Outdoors Month", picked up by nearly all state governors.

Illinois was one of the first states to support efforts that get children and families outside; on June 1, 2009, Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois General Assembly proclaimed June as "Leave No Child Inside" month. They announced support of the Chicago Wilderness Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

- Discover wilderness: prairies, dunes, forests, savannas, and wetlands
- Camp under the stars
- Follow a trail
- Catch and release fish, frogs, and insects
- Climb a tree
- Explore nature in neighborhoods and cities
- Celebrate heritage
- Plant a flower
- Play in the mud or a stream; and learn to swim.

"We want families to get outside, where kids experience nature and develop a strong connection to a natural place," said Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Marc Miller.

"Children who appreciate the natural world and its value are healthier and will carry the torch as our future conservation leaders," said Melinda Pruett-Jones, Executive Director of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance. "The Leave No Child Inside initiative reflects our collective goal to offer children opportunities to experience nature in unstructured and meaningful ways."

Of particular emphasis in the Leave No Child Inside movement is a focus on unstructured play. Research indicates that, while time spent outside with parents, caregivers, and other adults is valuable, it is also important that children be encouraged to play on their own, to explore and simply "be" in nature. This unstructured time fosters creativity, emotional well-being, independent learning and problem solving.

But how can park districts, forest preserves, nature centers, educators and other practitioners encourage unstructured play, beyond simply welcoming families to come to nature areas and explore? How, in essence, can you "program" unstructured play?

Celebrating June 2010 “Leave No Child Inside Month” and Beyond

During June 2010, 45 organizations – including park districts, forest preserve districts, and state agencies —collaborated on a series of free events featuring hands-on activities based on the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights and found that families’ sense of adventure and exploration was easily kindled in an environment that made them comfortable with getting off the paved trail and more personally engaged with the outdoors.

The event organizers enabled approximately 3,000 children and adults to dip for aquatic insects, build forts, catch-and-release fish, find geocaches, help plant native vegetation, paint with mud, roast marshmallows, set up a tent, or go on discovery hikes.



“Families sometimes need a little support and direction to help explore the natural world. Our staff provides that support by showing them how to dig in the dirt and look for worms, fly a kite or catch a fish. Once children and parents are ‘hooked,’ there is no going back—they are ready to explore on their own,” said Peggy Stewart, Assistant Director of Culture, Arts, and Nature at the Chicago Park District.

Also in June, several organizations began to offer free Leave No Child Inside “Explorer Days” events. The summer Explorer Days featured outdoor activities inspired by the lives of insects and were designed to nurture a child’s sense of wonder and appreciation for nature, while making parents and caregivers more comfortable with outdoor play.

The collaboration yielded many benefits for the organizations; funding was secured to advertise in both English and Spanish-language parenting magazines and select newspapers. This reached families that do not typically spend their free time exploring nature. The partner organizations also benefited from a branded set of graphics, printed fliers, and banners for the events, as well as from professional help with evaluating the activities. And, perhaps most importantly, the partners shared activity ideas and “lessons learned.”

“The Leave No Child Inside movement is an inspiring example of how park districts, state agencies, forest preserves, conservation organizations, community partners, and volunteers can work together at regional and state-wide scales to connect children and nature,” said Laurel Ross, Urban Conservation Director, The Field Museum and Chair, Chicago Wilderness.

IAPD/IPRA Conference Session: Leave No Child Inside: A How-to Workshop for Park Districts

Park districts interested in learning more about the programs and outreach materials can attend a hands-on workshop at the January 2011 IAPD/IPRA Conference, offered by the Glenview, Carbondale, and Urbana park districts.

Session participants will learn how to offer and market programs that promote nature discovery and exploration. They can also learn how to use and adapt existing resources, such as the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights, that make the link between outdoor play and the healthy development of children.

Leave No Child Inside 2011: Get on Board!

Building on this year’s momentum, planning is underway for Leave No Child Inside Month 2011! The Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Community Outreach and the Environmental Education Association of Illinois will facilitate collaborations of park districts and organizations state-wide.

The Leave No Child Inside Explorer Days will also be broadened to accommodate more park districts that can host events in community parks. New partners will benefit from the considerable knowledge base of “best practices” experienced in 2010 and – contingent upon funding renewal – assistance with marketing, program materials, and evaluation.

If your organization is interested in collaborating on events in 2011, please contact Emilian Geczi, Chicago Wilderness Leave No Child Inside Coordinator, at emilian.geczi@chicagowilderness.org, Olivia Dorothy, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Youth Program Coordinator, at olivia.dorothy@illinois.gov, or **Elizabeth Hagen-Moeller, Environmental Education Association of Illinois President**, at elizabeth.hagen@il.nacdnet.net.

Resources

A free Chicago Wilderness Leave No Child Inside Toolkit is available, including these resources:

- Sample public outreach materials
- Family activity suggestions
- Template for a “Passport to Nature”
- Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights (press-ready pdf)
- Program evaluation tool

The Chicago Wilderness Education Team also offers free regular workshops on facilitating nature play and exploration.

Contact Emilian Geczi, emilian.geczi@chicagowilderness.org, for a copy of the Leave No Child Inside toolkit or to receive future workshop announcements.

The Chicago Wilderness Leave No Child Inside web site lists activity suggestions and successful Leave No Child Inside programs: www.kidsoutside.info.

The Children and Nature Network’s web site is the de facto national information hub for the Leave No Child Inside movement: <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

The Nature Rocks web site has one of the richest sets of activity suggestions for families and educators: <http://www.naturerocks.org/>

About Chicago Wilderness

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. Over 250 public and corporate organizations work together to restore local nature and improve the quality of life for all. They do this by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. The Chicago Wilderness alliance launched its Leave No Child Inside (LNCI) initiative in 2007, with their goals to get more children outside and to increase the amount and quality of time that they spend there. For more information, visit www.chicagowilderness.org.



with other facilities and programs within the park district has helped increase awareness. It draws users of the more traditional park district offerings to the nature center.

To facilitate unstructured play, Heller Nature Center offers programs such as “Take a Hike” – casual hikes with naturalists tailored to the age levels and interests of the participants – and drop-in astronomy programs for a night-time experience at the center.

Heller and other park districts, including the Red Oak Nature Center and the Wildwood Nature Center (Park Ridge Park District), check-out backpacks to guests filled with field guides, binoculars, and other learning tools to turn a stroll through the nature areas into an exploration adventure.

The Wildwood Nature Center developed a new program called “Nature Play Classes” in which children “act out” popular books. Inspired by the *Fairy House Series*, children set to work constructing creative and magical dwellings with natural materials.

Wildwood Nature Center staff also added a simple journaling component to nature programs for 3-5 year olds, noting that the drawings become a great memento for parents.

John Fiorina, Manager of Natural Resources & Interpretation, Crystal Lake Park District, married technology to nature exploration with a geocaching program. Between December 2009 and May 2010, 80 families logged their geocache findings on the park district’s website. Fiorina notes that geocaching has an upfront resources cost, but once the program is in place, families can explore on their own without the use of staff time.

What’s Working:

Programs Promoting Unstructured Play

“Park districts are in the wellness business,” said Alice Eastman, Superintendent of Natural Resources at the Bolingbrook Park District. “Nature-based programming gets kids active, and focuses them.” Eastman is a point person for the IPRA Environmental Committee Education Task Force. She welcomes members who are interested in joining the task force to contact her at aeastman@bolingbrookparks.org or (630) 910-2303.

Eastman highlights parent and tot (age 2-4) classes as popular unstructured opportunities for one-on-one interaction in nature. She notes that the classes can be especially powerful for grandparents, who fondly remember their childhoods spent outside, and can share their memories of games and wonders.

The Cary Park District developed a “Play in the Park” program. In this program, early childhood educators and park staff guide programs that combine exploration of the parks, with projects such as planting flowers, as well as outdoor games and socialization.

The Red Oak Nature Center, Fox Valley Park District, hosted a series of “Come Out and Play Days” during the summer to encourage families to spend the afternoon outside, exploring together.

Red Oak has also developed an Outdoor Adventure Club and after-school program for underserved students at the Oak Park Elementary School in Aurora, IL. Jim Kenney, Outdoor Education Manager, underscores the importance of building relationships within the community and expanding opportunities for children to access nature.

Jeff Smith, Manager of the Heller Nature Center in the Park District of Highland Park, noted the challenge of capturing the audience which is unaware that nature programs and facilities exist in the community. Cross-promotion of events and activities

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Kite Months for Kite Plates



The Illinois Association of Park Districts has designated the months of April and May, 2011 "Flying 4 KIDS Months."

Now in its seventh year of existence, "Flying 4 Kids" months attract hundreds of families, kite enthusiasts and media at park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies throughout the state. The goal of an agency kite fly is to raise awareness of the Park District Youth License Plate, known to many as "the kite plate."

The "Kite Plate," more formally known as the Park District Youth License Plate, has generated \$145,000 for beyond school programming at park and recreation agencies across Illinois because \$25.00 of the plate purchase and renewal price helps fund the PowerPlay! Grant program. This IAPD service gives grants to agencies to use as seed money to conduct model beyond-school programs that encourage youth to develop healthy habits.

Host a Kite Fly at Your Agency

Park, recreation and conservation agencies host family-oriented kite fly events for the citizens in their communities. Events range from kite fly competitions to leisurely kite flies with kite-making stations for kids and fun competitions such as "Best Charlie Brown" (best kite crash), biggest kite, smallest kite, highest kite flown, etc.

The IAPD offers a free "Event Planner's Guide" to participating agencies, which gives the framework to build a kite fly event. Whether you are planning a kite fly alone, or tying your fly into another promotion, the ideas presented in this guide will help make your event as easy as possible on you and your staff and as enjoyable as possible for your guests. The guide contains applicable ideas and information from professional kitefliers throughout the state who may be willing to come to your event and show off their big, colorful kites. Most kitefliers are happy to share their love of kites with others, and are just waiting for the opportunity to help with events like "Flying 4 Kids." For your kit, contact IAPD Public Relations Director Bobbie Jo Hill at bjhill@ILparks.org.



Get Your Plate.

Call the IAPD at

1-877-783-KIDS

or

Check the Web Site

www.4KIDSplate.com

Referenda Results – November 2, 2010

Fourteen of the approximately two hundred referenda submitted to voters at the general election held on November 2, 2010, pertained to park, recreation, and conservation issues. Ten of those referenda passed.

Questions relating to bond and tax measures showed mixed results. Voters approved both an \$18 million bond issue for the Bartlett Park District to acquire and improve the 138-acre Villa Olivia golf course, ski hill and banquet facility and to renovate and expand the district's aquatic center and a \$500,000 bond issue for the Peotone Park District to purchase, renovate and equip a building and improve its site. Measures to establish a debt service extension base for Flanagan Park District and to increase the debt service extension base of Clarendon Hills Park District were also approved. However, bond issues for Batavia Park District, Lake Bluff Park District, the Village of Freeburg, and the United City of Yorkville all failed.

The following table summarizes the types of initiatives, the amounts requested and vote totals for the 2010 general election. Data for this report was obtained from election authorities and news outlets after all precincts were counted but before results were officially certified. If you are aware of an initiative that is not included, please contact Jason Anselment at janselment@ILparks.org.

Park and Forest Preserve Referenda Results

DISTRICT	JURISDICTION	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PASS/FAIL	VOTES YES/NO
Bartlett Park District	Cook, DuPage, Kane	Bond	Shall the Bartlett Park District, DuPage, Cook and Kane Counties, Illinois, acquire and improve the 138-acre Villa Olivia golf course, ski hill and banquet facility, renovate and expand the Bartlett Aquatic Center and issue its bonds to the amount of \$18,000,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?	Pass	Yes = 5,948 No = 5,360
Batavia Park District	Kane	Bond	Shall the Batavia Park District, Kane County, Illinois, be authorized to issue \$20,000,000 general obligation alternate bonds for the purpose of building and equipping a community recreation center and related parking facilities and acquiring and improving the land therefor.	Fail	Yes = 4,722 No = 6,374
Chicago Heights Park District	Cook	Misc.	Shall the Chicago Heights Park District, Cook County, Illinois, alter its current form of government and adopt a form of government with (1) the number of voting districts changed from six to seven; (2) the number of park commissioners changed from six to seven, with one park commissioner per district; (3) the board of park commissioners choosing from their number a President of said board; and, (4) current park commissioners who have additional time remaining on their terms being allowed to complete their terms until the 2013 consolidated election?	Pass	Yes = 2,961 No = 1,852
Clarendon Hills Park District	DuPage	Tax	Shall the debt service extension base under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for the Clarendon Hills Park District, DuPage County, Illinois, for payment of principal and interest on limited bonds be increased from \$65,587 to \$143,761.66 for the 2010 levy year and all subsequent levy years, such debt service extension base to be increased each year by the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index during the 12-month calendar year preceding the levy year?	Pass	Yes = 1,715 No = 1,412

DISTRICT	JURISDICTION	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PASS/FAIL	VOTES YES/NO
Cordova Township Park District	Rock Island	Misc.	Proposition for Organization and Establishment of Cordova Township Park District to be known as "Cordova Township Park District"	Pass	Yes = 138 No = 87
Village of Downers Grove	DuPage	Adv.	Shall the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor take immediate steps to review the services being provided by townships and special districts and consider consolidation of these services with other units of local government in an effort to reduce or eliminate unnecessary levels of local government?	Pass	Yes = 14,179 No = 3,721
Sangamon County	Sangamon	Adv.	Shall there be created a Citizens' Efficiency Commission which shall have as its purpose improving local government effectiveness by identifying opportunities for improved cooperation, coordination and reduction of duplication of services among local government in Sangamon County?	Pass	Yes = 4,184 No = 2,671
Flanagan Park District	Livingston	Tax	Shall the debt service extension base under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for the Flanagan Park District, Livingston County, Illinois, for payment or principal and interest on limited bonds be established at \$45,000 for the 2010 levy year and all subsequent levy years?	Pass	Yes = 396 No = 187
Franklin Park District	DeKalb	Misc.	Shall the Franklin Township Park District reorganize as a general park district under the park district code?	Pass	Yes = 477 No = 236
Village of Freeburg	St. Clair	Bond	Shall bonds in an amount not to exceed \$2,000,000 be issued by the Village of Freeburg, Illinois for the purpose of renovation, improvement, and expansion of the municipal pool, bearing interest at a rate not to exceed the maximum rate authorized by statute?	Fail	Yes = 635 No = 1,024
Lake Bluff Park District	Lake	Bond	Shall the Lake Bluff Park District, Lake County, Illinois, construct and equip an outdoor community pool and related facilities, maintain, improve and preserve its parks and facilities, pay expenses incident thereto and issue its bonds to the amount of \$10.7 million for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?	Fail	Yes = 1,461 No = 2,238
Peotone Park District	Will	Bond	Shall the Peotone Park District, Will County, Illinois, purchase, renovate and equip a building, improve the site thereof and issue its bonds to the amount of \$500,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?	Pass	Yes = 761 No = 696
Village of Riverside	Cook	Misc.	Shall the Village of Riverside retain its Parks and Recreation Board?	Pass	Yes = 2,704 No = 737
Yorkville	Kendall	Bond	Shall the United City of Yorkville issue general obligations bonds, bearing interest at a rate not to exceed the limitation of applicable law, in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000 for purpose of acquiring land and constructing bike trails and pedestrian walkways but only for Projects within the municipal boundaries of the United City of Yorkville that require City funding of not more than twenty percent (20%)?	Fail	Yes = 2,261 No = 2,554

PEOPLE & PLACES



Fox Valley Park District Hires New Executive Director

The Fox Valley Park District has selected Nancy McCaul as its new executive director to succeed Steve Messerli, who retired on Dec. 31. McCaul was the director of finance and administration at the Fox Valley Park District since 2005 and brings more than 20 years of park district

experience, having previously worked in various administrative roles at Bartlett, Naperville and Homewood-Flossmoor park districts.

McCaul was instrumental in refunding a pair of general obligation park bonds that will save the district and its taxpayers \$2.1 million in interest expense. Also, McCaul helped Fox Valley attain two increases in bond rating, that resulted in an additional savings of \$169,000. Fox Valley has received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States for the last three years and has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 12 consecutive years. McCaul said "adapting to how lifestyles are changing" is among her top initiatives. Addressing the childhood obesity epidemic, providing intergenerational programs and offering more services for active adults and seniors will be important issues.

McCaul, a Certified Park and Recreation Professional, currently serves on the Illinois Park and Recreation Association Board of Directors and Finance Committee. She officially began in her new capacity on Dec. 15, 2010 overseeing a full-time staff of 91 employees.



Dr. Larry Reiner retired as NEDSRA Executive Director after more than 33 years of dedicated service.

During Larry's tenure, the Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association's (NEDSRA) received numerous state and national awards, including two National Gold Medals for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. Larry also received numerous accolades and awards

for his professional achievements and contributions and for his service on state and national task forces and commissions. He also spent much of his career advocating on all levels of government for legislation and funding to advance the parks and recreation movement.

Larry was instrumental in the passage of Senate Bill 1881, Property Tax Cap Exemption. Also through Larry's vision and determination, NEDSRA became the first and only special recreation association to operate a fully accessible sports-training facility for individuals with disabilities. Several teams from the Chicagoland area use this facility for year-round training and competition.

As a result of Larry's leadership, NEDSRA has grown and prospered over the years. The agency's staff, programs and services are stronger than ever due to Larry's excellent leadership and passion for making NEDSRA the best it can be.

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Bob Newport named as Round Lake Area Park District Executive Director

The Illinois Association of Park Districts recently performed a Directors Search Program service for the Round Lake Area Park District. Bob Newport has been hired as its new executive director. Newport has spent the last 13 years with the Round Lake Area Park District. During his tenure at the park district, he has held many positions including: Recreation Supervisor, Athletic Supervisor, Aquatics Supervisor, Facility Manager, Superintendent of Recreation and most recently Assistant Director.

While at the Round Lake Area Park District, Newport's accomplishments have included creating an award winning partnership with the United Way of Lake County which has led to summer camp specific funding for multiple years, receiving a grant for the development of Fairfield Sports Park T-ball field from Major League Baseball's Foundation and for implementing a 30% increase in programs offered by the park district over a 2 year period. Bob has served as liaison to the Friends of the Round Lake Parks Foundation for the past three years and has been involved locally in the Round Lake Area with numerous community organizations for a number of years.

Chicago Park District Unveils Northerly Island Framework Plan

The Chicago Park District recently unveiled a framework plan for Northerly Island, sitting uniquely on Chicago's lakefront less than a mile from downtown Chicago. The framework plan will serve as a guiding document that will help shape the future of Northerly Island Park over the next 20 to 30 years. "Northerly Island is a very unique urban open space with an equally unique location," said Timothy J. Mitchell, Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO. "We have an incredible opportunity to lay the groundwork for future generations and eventually develop this site into a multi-seasonal park that will potentially rival our Millennium Park, New York City's Central Park and London's Hyde Park."



The Northerly Island Framework Plan takes advantage of its unique location by creating exciting outdoor experiences and strengthening Chicago's leading position as a 21st century green city. The future Northerly Island Park calls for this site to become an outdoor classroom with activity-oriented programming year round. In addition, the future Northerly Island Park will set an example for sustainability through its financial viability, maintenance considerations, reduced energy use, and energy production.



Ron Diehl Retires as 40-Year Director of Effingham Park District

Beginning his career directly out of college, Ron Diehl has held the same title as director for the Effingham Park District from 1972 through 2011. Under his leadership, the park district has grown from an agency without baseball leagues or recreation programs, to a district of over 90 acres that encompasses two new parks with baseball diamonds, tennis courts and a skateboard complex. Ron credits past and current park board members for allowing him the freedom to research new projects and guide them to completion, such as the Kluthe Memorial Pool at the new Evergreen Hollow Park and the park district's expanded Hendelmeyer Park Recreation Center.

Under Ron's leadership, the agency has grown from one employee to more than 100 full and part-time employees striving to meet the recreational needs of a diverse and growing community. Diehl has worked over the decades to increase the park district budget from \$35,000 to a \$1.4 million entity with bond issues passed. Ron will be retiring on January 31, but plans to remain active in the community.

Are You Receiving Emails from IAPD?

By Cindy Deiters, IAPD Marketing Director

If you're not receiving broadcast emails, e-News, legal news, legislative updates or legislative alerts from IAPD, please check your profile on IAPD's database by going to www.ILparks.org. Log in and verify that we have your correct email address. If we do not have your correct email address, please update your profile.

If your email address is correct and you still are not receiving emails from IAPD, please check your email program's SPAM filter. Or, if you are an employee, you may need to alert your agency's IT administrator of the problem to make sure that ilparks.org is an accepted domain address.

Have you forgotten your username or password?

Go to IAPD's website at www.ILparks.org and click on the "Forgot your password?" hyperlink on the right-hand side of the homepage. You will need to provide either your username or email address to have your password electronically sent to you. If you do not remember either your username or password, please email Cindy Deiters, IAPD Marketing Director, at cdeiters@ILparks.org.

Is your profile missing from IAPD's database?

If you do not have a profile in our database and your agency is an IAPD member, please contact your agency's director or administrator and ask him/her to do the following:

- 1) Log in to IAPD's website using the agency's username and password.
- 2) Click on the "Sub-accounts" icon.
- 3) Type in your email address in the box to "Invite New Members."
- 4) Click the orange "Send Invite" button.

You will receive an email with a hyperlink to complete your profile. Upon completion and IAPD approval, your profile will be activated.

■ communicating your image with people

By Tracy Johnson and Sue Rini

Here's a question that most of us can probably answer correctly: "How do you know who the employees are in Best Buy?"

If you answered, "They're the ones in the royal blue golf shirts," you are right. It's not an accident. Those blue shirts match the corporation's colors of royal blue and yellow. The whole Best Buy image and brand is communicated consistently using their colors, their print and electronic graphic design, on their trucks, and, with their employees. Another example is Target with their red shirts. UPS owns the dark brown with gold lettering. You get the idea.

People form opinions of an organization at every "customer contact" point. There are several ways that people come into contact with a park and recreation agency. These include personal interaction, systems, printed and electronic communications, facilities, parks and amenities, to name some basics. Of these, perhaps none is more vital than the personal interaction—the people contact.

At Carol Stream Park District, we were pretty much like all other community recreation agencies. Our park signs are all the same style and colors. We plaster our logo on everything. For our staff, we issued staff shirts, some sweaters, and seasonal shirts. Certain times and certain events, uniform shirts were mandatory. We also had a dress code that encouraged some types of clothing and prohibited others. Unfortunately, there was the inevitable struggle between compliance and the tendency to stretch the limits if possible.

The truth was that **we did not present a consistent, recognizable image** that mirrored our park district brand. We needed our staff in all the varied positions and functions to be as recognizable as the retail store examples. We needed to make a change.

The starting point was the strategic objective to develop our corporate image. That objective called for the following:

- **Consistent marketing techniques**
- **Incorporate consistent identity throughout the district**
- **Develop a new logo to communicate brand**
- **Develop uniform colors, styles**

The "Look"

A committee of staff volunteered to tackle the issue in establishing a "look". Their mission is to enable employees **to project a professional, friendly image** while experiencing the advantage of more casual and relaxed clothing, **identifiable to the patrons** that frequent our district recreation centers and parks. We started with basic questions: What do we want to eliminate? What do we want to accomplish? What variables



will be allowed once the "look" has been determined? What is negotiable and what is not? Why do some staff carry the image while others don't... what have been the obstacles? The situation could be summed up as follows:

- To eliminate overly casual attire, whether it be too old, revealing, or too untidy/messy.
- To have our staff comfortable, but still recognizable to customers.
- Set a level of acceptability that all staff could understand for different situations and jobs (for example, hats allowed outside but not inside; t-shirts for sports staff, but not in the office).
- Blue jeans of any kind and style were “outlawed”—there are just too many opportunities to go overly casual, bordering on sloppy. However, within simple boundaries, shorts and athletic shoes were added to the “allowed” list.
- Barriers to staff wearing uniforms generally came down to not liking the color, or the style, and, most often, the fit. Standard 3-button golf shirts tend to be cut for men and they just don’t fit well on most women. Nobody likes wearing clothing that doesn’t fit well or flatter the wearer. This was a big time awakening and the most important discovery.

After looking at several options, the committee decided on a clothing supplier that best suited our needs. What we discovered was that to do this well, we needed to pick a park district line of clothing. There were hundreds of styles to choose from, but with the aid of a company consultant, it was reduced to a workable number. At the outset, we selected about 20 women’s styles and about 10 men’s designs.

Implementation

The park district look has two main components. One is the use of a corporate supplier of clothing that was selected. The other is street/office clothing as defined by certain standards and descriptions. Selection of long and lasting colors and styles was important. Trendy

Our vendor has a system that allows for the district to put a certain amount of money on account for each employee to access. Our decision was to start the first year with an allowance of \$250 per person. As an illustration, that amount could purchase two golf shirts, a cap, a fleece vest, two pairs of slacks, one oxford shirt and one sweater, leaving another \$25 for another selection. The total budget was \$10,000 which represented 1/10 of one percent of the District budget. The front desk reception/registration employees were allowed a larger amount since they were being required to wear the logo clothing daily.

One year later

With only one or two exceptions, the new line of clothing has been embraced by the entire staff. People chose the styles and fit that best suited their needs and their preferences. But, despite the variety, and with the consistent colors, we have achieved the uniformity, recognition and consistency that we sought.

What we have found is that there have been a number of benefits:

- **The over-all appearance now supports and reinforces the brand and image.**
- **There is a greater sense of team and togetherness.**
- **Staff members enjoy the comfort and the variety of being able to combine styles and colors.**
- **Any staff is able to purchase clothing beyond their personal account budget and several have done so.**
- **Residents have noticed and have given positive feedback.**
- **Episodes of employees who wear inappropriate clothing have dropped drastically.**

Additionally, we find that the new look reinforces our commitment to professionalism, without being stuffy. It communicates our



styles and colors tend to be discontinued every few years. This was communicated to our vendor and with their help we selected four colors that they have always carried and that matched our new park district official colors. Those were **white, true navy, true blue and pale emerald**. The styles and corresponding available colors were compiled into our own customized catalog.

Because we were shifting from our old, “two-shirts-for-everyone” standard to an a la carte menu type of logo wear selection, we knew we had to change the allocation method. How many items should everyone get? We determined that staff members required to wear our logo emblazoned clothing every day would get a larger allowance. Administrative staff with the option to “dress above the code,” would get a slightly smaller allowance. The part time office employees were given a slightly smaller allowance, while seasonal workers were supplied staff shirts in bulk.

eagerness to provide high quality service, and, certainly displays and reinforces our brand.

In the second year, we will be adding other clothing items to the line. Also, because we chose clothing that is of a higher quality and durability, the allowance per person in the second year is being reduced by 20%. That will allow for a continual update and renewal of each individual’s wardrobe.

About the Authors: *Sue Rini is the Director of Finance and Administration for the Carol Stream Park District. At the start of the C.S.P.D. Look effort, she was the Human Resources manager. Tracy Johnson is an eight-year employee who is the Executive Assistant to the Director of Parks and Recreation. The two co-chaired the committee’s effort. To receive a full presentation and more detail of the CSPD look, please email tracyj@csparks.org*

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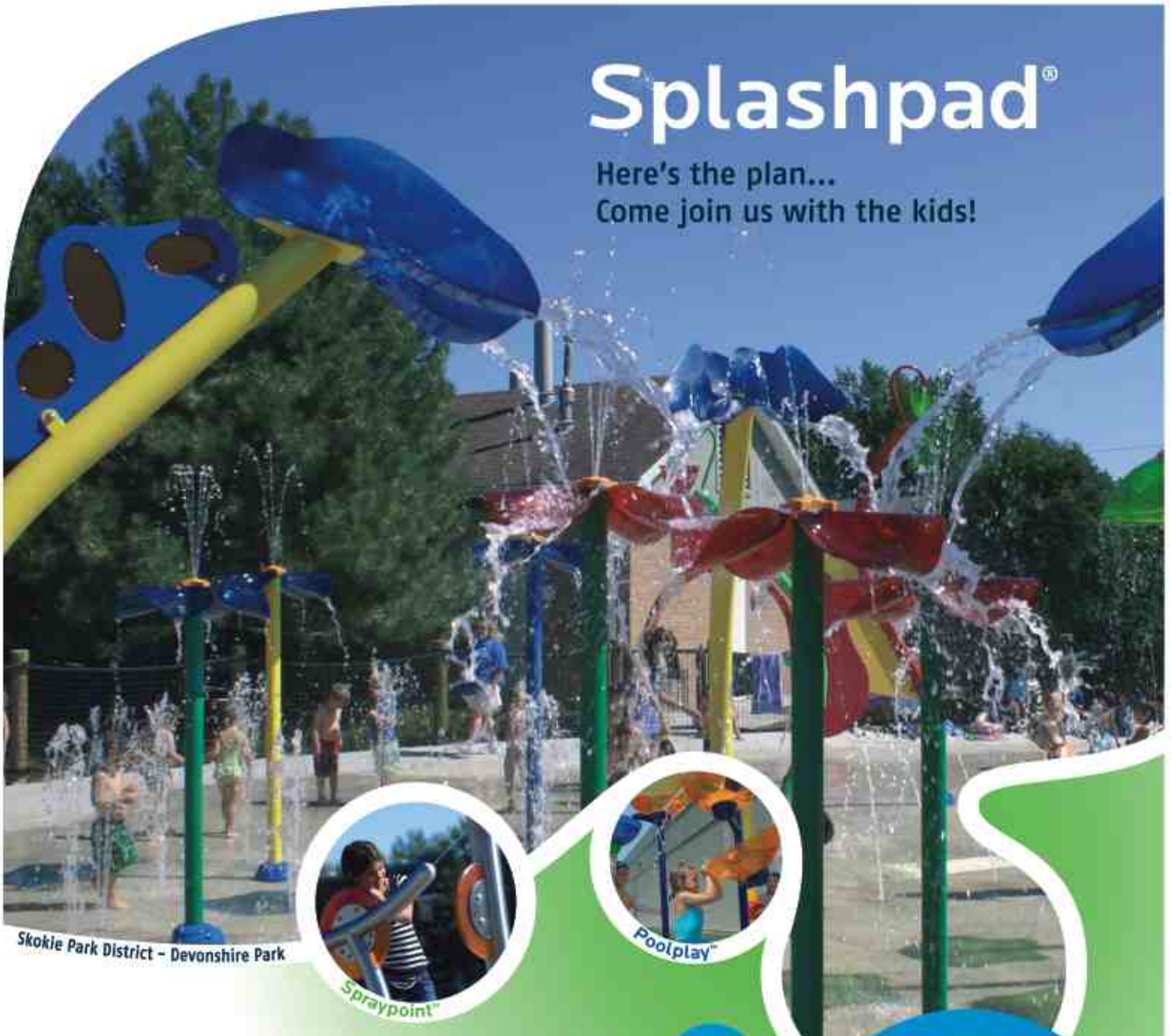
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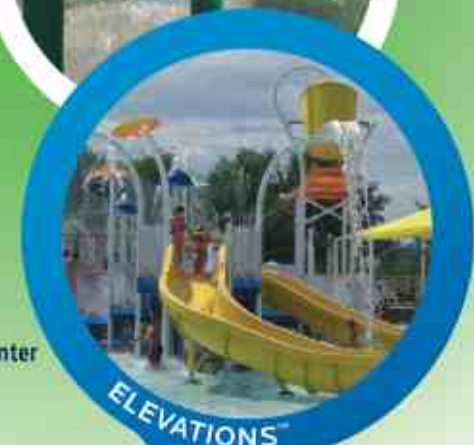
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